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The Ruins of Insurgency



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Chapter 1 by Liam Ashdown

Crouched in the ruins of a concrete jungle, a single drop of sweat started to trickle down my forehead. I struggled to remove the gloves that were now stuck to the back of my hands. My breath was slowly returning to me, despite the scorching heat. As I delved into my black rucksack, I considered my next move. Do I attempt to run across the street, where I could see the New York Film Academy, (or what was left of it) and risk missing curfew. Or do I play it safe and turn back. My steady hands twirled the lid of the flask and placed the lid on my knee. I took three gulps, careful to conserve my water until I got back to the camp. The others will be disappointed at the meager results of my scavenge. Night was slowly approaching and I knew if I didn't make it back by curfew, I wouldn't last until morning. I'll have to return tomorrow and look around the Academy then. Hopefully there might be something worthwhile there, if not, I dread to think what might happen. I was halfway back before I noticed a patrol of Hainers, the pathetic lapdogs of the state. They strode with unmatched confidence. Who would be brave enough to attack them now? Maybe not in now, but the time will come, soon. I waited for them to pass, preferring not to have to justify why I was carrying stolen cutlery and wiring, and made my way back to camp. I reached to the wooden cellar door and rapped in a very specific tune. As the doors swung open, two rusty barrels faced me.

"Lower your guns, it's me!" I ordered, pushing my way past and descending down into the darkness.

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Chapter 2 by Luke Blundell



"You're cutting it close, Derrick." a voice came from the darkness. It was Quin, the leader of our little crew. "Out for that long, you must've gotten something worthwhile." He emerged from the dark, a twisted grin on his face. Quin was not a good man, hell, none of us were. But he, he took pleasure in the suffering of others. I had seen it, and I didn't plan to fall victim to it.

"A bit of a light haul, Q." I shoved my way past the entry guards and tossed my bag at his feet.

"But there's something in there you'll like."

He snatched the bag from the ground, throwing it open. Immediately, his eyes lit up. "Where the hell did you find this?"

I flashed him a toothy smile. "I have my ways."

"But this is..."

Chapter 3 by Emerald, Eternal Madman



I wait as he stares at it in disbelief. "This could change everything!" "For the better, right?" "It depends on how it's used. If used correctly, yes. If used wrong, it could be the worst thing to happen to us. Good you brought it here, but without any sort of indication on how to use it, we might as well be cavemen with a fork." Well, that's just great. "Alright, I'll go back and see if I can find something of use." "Actually, I have a better place to send you. As it turns out, there's another refuge nearby. The people there have the instructions. Go, obtain them by any means necessary." That must mean we've got the ball rolling. Soon enough, we'll be free of the tyranny of the state.

I crawl over the heaps of wreckage. The place is practically a ruin. Right as I approach the crest, I hear footsteps, and clanking metal. Heiners? Maybe. I peek just over the crest to see. It isn't. Just some strange, hooded guy, sifting around in the dirt. Can't see anything else remarkable, except a wierd tatoo on the right arm. I think I've seen it somewhere. "I know you're there." I duck back, hoping he's bluffing. "What, do you think I'm an ostrich? I don't forget you the moment you disappear from view. Or I disappear from yours. Stop eavesdropping on a scavenger. You'rn't going to hear anything of use."

Chapter 4 by Emerald, Eternal Madman



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"Because I've seen it somewhere before." "You have? Where?" "On a thing I brought to Quin." "Quin... Quin... Alright, good to know where my stuff is." "But I didn't tell you where he is!" "Yeah, you did. You think I'm alone?" He looks like he is. "I'm not." He whispers something under his breath, then, I couldn't make this up, He walked on fire over my head towards the base. He's not going to make it past the guns. Unless... no, he's a dead man walking. I hope.

I make the rest of the way more or less unimpeded. "State your business." "I'm here for the instructions for use of..." I draw an image, "This." "Looks like you already know." "You know I don't mean the paper." "Of course I do. Come on in." The door opens and I enter.

Chapter 5 by Dan Ramazan



It was dark behind the door. As soon as I stepped into the darkness, something strongly slapped me on the cheek. I did not understand what's going on and received one more slap.

"Come on, kid. Get up!" I woke up. The old man with the tattoo has swung for another strike.

"Stop! I woke up!" The old man looked at me as if he was deciding whether or not to hit me once more. Then he slowly lowered his hand.

"What happened?" I asked in surprise, "I don't remember how I blacked out."

"We tried our new protection mechanisms on you," the old man coolly replied. I realized that it is pointless to blame him. He looked too satisfied, to feel guilt.

"Stop staring at me, kid. Consider yourself a volunteer for our little experiment. A symbol of trust and mutual support of one refuge to another," he looked at me, "You're a member of the other refuge, aren't you?"

I looked around. I was lying on a hard bed in a dimly lit stone room with no windows. Apart from a bed there were a couple of chairs and a rickety table. Judging by the musty smell, we were underground. Assessing the situation, I have decided not to lie.

"Yes, my name is Derrick. Quin's refuge," I tried to speak confidently and decisively. It didn't work out well. The old man chuckled grimly.

"I'm Leo. Leo's refuge," he slowly walked away from me and sat down on a chair, "So what does Quin want from the old revolutionary?"

I barely got up on the bed. My head was buzzing, but I was able to gather my thoughts and told Leo about Quin's invitation to join. I told him about my finding. I told him about the scheme of Heinrich. When I had finished, Leo's face darkened.

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Finally, he began, after a continued silence, "Listen carefully and do not interrupt me. It is great that you told me about the bomb. I do not think Quin would like that you told me about it. I fought with him side by side during the First Uprising. I know that two-faced bastard. He knows that I would refuse to meet. He didn't send you to persuade us to unite with your crew. He just wanted to check that we're still here. He needs to test a bomb, and he wants to try it on us. My refusal is a perfect excuse," I felt that he is crazy. After his speech I just wanted to get out quickly from this room. So I just nodded in agreement. The old man chuckled.

"You don't believe me. Go to Quin and say that I refused. Quin will equip the next courier from your crew with a bomb. Check yourself, it will convince you better than I ever could," he stood up and went to the exit. Before leaving the room, he turned to me and said, "When you will be convinced that I am right, take the transmitter and contact me. A member of my crew is waiting for you at the door, her name is Erica. She will show you the exit and give the transmitter." He walked away, leaving me alone in the room. Here I am, right between Leo and Quin. And I don't even know what's worse, if Leo's wrong or right.

Chapter 6 by Emerald, Eternal Madman



I went back to where I thought our base was, but all I found there was a pile of ashes and dust. I try to dig up the place, and the first person I find is Quin. Big surprise there, I suppose. He was always willing to put anyone in danger to save himself. "How..?" "What happened?" "He came in, took it, and tore the place apart. We barely had any time to react. Guns didn't even see him enter, but we all saw him leave. The remaining supports created small pockets of air, but most of us didn't get there in time." "By the way, Leo refused to cooperate. We don't know how to use it." "Just great. So now we're at the bottom, and... wait... that symbol on his arm..." "Yeah, I saw him use it. Sort of." "What do you mean 'sort of'?" "He lit it on fire, claiming his abilities were keeping it from warping him." "Of course! That's how we use it!" "Huh?" I don't get it. "Fire. We place the symbol on what we want it to affect, then light it on fire. If we can place it instantaneously, we've practically already won!" Yes... Yes, that makes sense. Rig some lighters, and something that would place the symbol on things without being warped itself, we could beat the heiners, if we're stealthy about it. Not like that's any different from what we were already doing. After

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I was in the front line. A group of soldiers those who survived. I didn't know them. In fact, it's not so important. But it seemed important to me to know their names.

"What's your name?" The man on my right slapped me. I turned my head and my neighbor on the left also did this. I think it happened again...

I woke up. Dark-skinned girl with curly hair was staring at me. It happened again. These were just hallucinations. They again used their mechanism to knock me out. It started to piss me off.

"Enough! Why can't you just take me through the door, as normal people do?" I shouted at the girl. She smiled, "We have a small amount of visitors, and protection mechanisms are not completely tested. In the end, you liked it. Judging by your mumbling, you were leading some army and going to kill Leo."

I glared at her. Erica acted just like Leo. As if nothing had happened. It's useless, she won't say anything. I got up and looked around. We were in an abandoned, half-ruined house. She also got up and nodded at the backpack in the corner, "All your stuff. I think you can easily find your way back home. And we also need to return." Only now I noticed that there were two huge guys smoking outside the window.

"Bodyguards? Are you afraid to walk alone in the wastelands?" I asked sarcastically.

She laughed, "I can stand up for myself. But I didn't hire to carry your fat ass."

She went to the window, intending to jump out. I remembered the Leo's offer and stopped her, "Your boss. He said that you'll give me some kind of a transmitter. "

She stood still, but didn't turn around, "Believe me, Leo won't have any time for the machinations and intrigues in the nearest future. And tell your boss to leave my camp alone."

Without giving me a chance to reply, she jumped out of the window, and all three of them had disappeared from sight.

I took my backpack and went out onto the roof. Evening came, and I thought, looking at the sunset. I had to think about everything that has happened in recent times. I got a task. Get help from their camp. Leo soon will be shifted or Erica will die with her little local revolution. In any case, all of them are in danger. They won't have any time to protect themselves from Quin's bombs during this civil war. But there also might be no bombs. Most likely, Leo was just trying to manipulate me. So what the hell should I do?

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